

COMMENTS from Evelyn

by Evelyn Macomber

UPDATING QARs

Implications for CRISS® Teachers/Trainers

The last time I heard Scott Paris (Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement & The University of Michigan) speak was in Miami, Florida, at the International Reading Association Conference. He was talking about assessment and what to do following a diagnosis. One of his statements was something like, “In terms of teaching comprehension, all teachers should, by now, be well-versed in Taffy Raphael’s Question-Answer Relationships and be certain QARs are a solid part of their teaching repertoire.” I thought then, and still think now, that we (teachers) do not “get” just how powerful this strategy is, nor do we imagine the empowerment this strategy gives to young students.

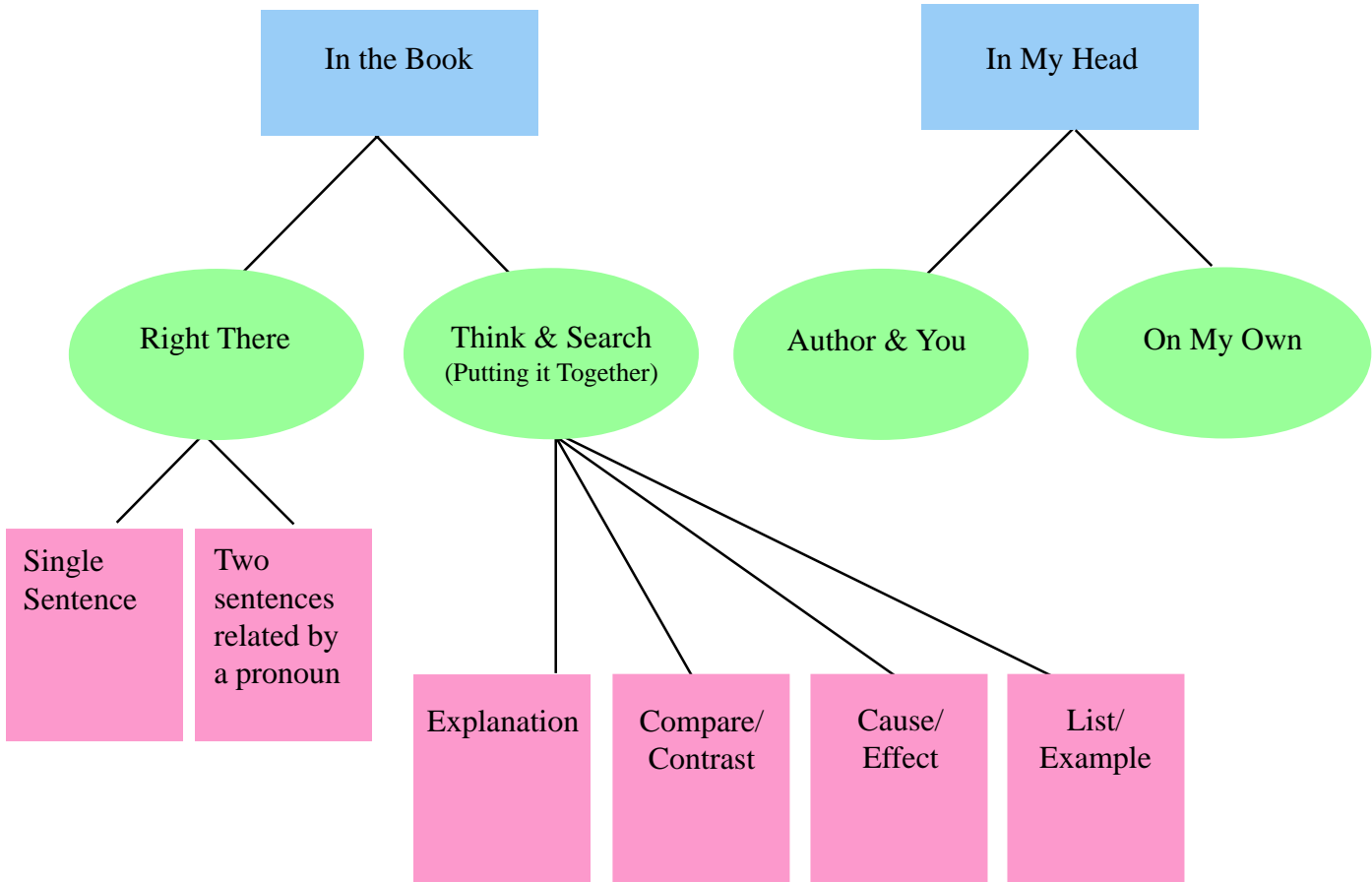
Taffy Raphael’s Update, 1986

Here, for our refreshing, is a reminder from an article by Taffy. In *The Reading Teacher*, February 1986, Taffy revisited Question-Answer Relationships.

“The original QAR program was based on the Pearson and Johnson (1978) question taxonomy. They proposed that questions should not be identified in isolation, but rather in relation to both the text being read and the reader’s background knowledge. Research (Raphael, 1984) suggests the value of QAR instruction lies in the way it clarifies how students can approach the tasks of reading texts and answering questions. Students without QAR knowledge lacked strategic behaviors when attempting to understand text and answer questions.”

To further clarify her strategy, Taffy created the following graphic.

Relationships Among the Four Types of Question-Answer Relationships



Here are some key ideas from the article where Taffy suggests using “QAR as a framework for comprehension.”

1) QAR instruction can provide the basis for three comprehension strategies:

- locating information
- examining text structure
- understanding when an inference would be required

2) QARs can help students find information in text using *key words* and *text structure* as tools. This is especially helpful for older students who understand relationships between different sources of information. For example, a student who understands QARs may first realize a question is asking for information of the *Think and Search* type—integrating information across text segments. The student may then determine the text structure is cause and effect. Next, he searches for key words and phrases such as “since,” “as a result of,” or “because,” thus locating the appropriate information for answering the question. Finally, the student determines if the information is present within the text and, if not, concludes it is necessary to draw an inference. This process may be summarized in the following steps:

- “Try on” a Think & Search QAR.
- Determine if text structure is a cause/effect or list/example.
- Look for additional clues with transitional words.
- Decide if the information is *In the Book* (Think and Search) or if it is *In My Head* and an inference (Author & You) is required.

Forum Presentation, 1988


On May 19, 1988, Taffy presented at a forum I attended in Gainesville, Florida. Here are Taffy’s QAR principles from her original notes:

“What principles underlie my instruction?”

1. Scaffolded instruction
2. GRADUAL TRANSFER OF CONTROL TO STUDENTS
3. Thinking aloud to let students in on when and why QARs can be helpful
4. Integrating strategy instruction with content area instruction”

NRP Report, 2000

In the National Reading Panel report, the research of Richardson and Morgan (1994) was presented. They found that as early as eight weeks following detailed implementation of QARs, students showed significant gains in comprehension. In the pink box is a summary of NRP’s information regarding questioning.



Question Answering was investigated in 17 studies, mainly in grades 3 through 5. This procedure may be used as a part of multiple strategy packages where the teacher uses questions to guide and monitor readers’ comprehension.

Question Generation. The strongest scientific evidence was found for the effectiveness of asking readers to generate questions during reading. There were 27 studies on this treatment that was used on readers in grades 3 through 9. There is mixed evidence that general reading comprehension is improved on standardized comprehension tests. Question generation may also be best used as a part of a multiple strategy instruction program. (pp. 4-45)

Sooo . . .

Think about connecting QARs to more than just questioning. It is a major *comprehension* strategy. Teachers with whom I work repeatedly note gains in comprehension when taking the time to teach students the *relationships* between questions and answers.

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